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DE RUEHDG #0288/01 0532304
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 222302Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0831
INFO WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0036
RUEHBH/AMEMBASSY NASSAU
RUEHC/USAID WASHDC 0025
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
RUMIESS/SOUTHCOM IESS MIAMI FL

UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 000288

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ENRG](#) [HA](#) [DR](#)

SUBJECT: DR: DAS Reynoso Discusses Haiti with Foreign Minister,
Other
Officials

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) WHA DAS Julissa Reynoso, during her 5-9 February 2010 visit, travelled to the Jimani border crossing and met with a wide range of leading Dominican Government (GoDR) officials, business leaders and intellectuals where the principal topic was what role the Dominican Republic should play in Haiti relief and reconstruction, although there were also discussions of the upcoming congressional/municipal elections and civil registry issues. Septels address her meeting with President Leonel Fernandez and her conversations with judicial officials and civil society representatives on transparency and the rule of law. END SUMMARY.

VISIT TO THE JIMANI BORDER CROSSING

12. (SBU) On 6 February, DAS Reynoso and Charge Lambert travelled to Jimani, the Dominican border town that has become a logistical hub for supplies and people moving into Haiti from the Dominican Republic. Upon arrival, the DAS spoke briefly with Vice President Rafael Alburquerque and Planning Minister Temistocles Montas, both of whom were also assessing the situation in the border region. She then met with Defense Minister Pedro Rafael Pena Antonio and Brigadier General Francisco Jose Gil Ramirez of the Specialized Frontier Corps (CESFRONT), the GoDR's border security force. Pena Antonio gave a presentation about "Mano Amiga" ("Friendly Hand"), the military's assistance operation in support of Haiti relief efforts, and pointed out the deteriorating condition of the road from Jimani to Port-au-Prince, suggesting that an alternative route may need to be found unless repairs can be made quickly. DAS Reynoso said coordinating humanitarian efforts and managing the transition from relief to recovery to development were two key concerns, underscoring her desire for "sustainable" solutions to the crisis.

13. (SBU) DAS Reynoso also met with representatives of international organizations working in Jimani to seek their views on the situation and ask how the U.S. could most effectively support the UN effort in the move from fulfilling immediate needs

to reconstruction to development. International Organization for Migration (IOM) Country Representative Cy Winter said logistical problems were the key hurdle agencies faced as they tried to move supplies and people through an undersized humanitarian corridor. Representatives from several organizations, including the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), underscored the lack of information available about the situation in the mountainous and remote areas of the DR-Haiti frontier; one UNICEF representative cited high malnutrition rates of up to 20 percent in Haitian patients appearing in Dominican hospitals. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative said his organization's main focus was protection of displaced persons. DAS Reynoso also met with representatives from the Health and Social Security Ministry (SESPAS), as well as from the International Medical Alliance, a Knoxville-based charity, who took her on a tour of the Buen Samaritano health clinic facility.

FOREIGN MINISTER CARLOS MORALES TRONCOSO

14. (SBU) DAS Reynoso emphasized the USG's long-term commitment to Haiti relief and reconstruction in her 8 February meeting with Foreign Minister Morales. She praised the performance of the GoDR, Dominican business sector and the Dominican people in providing a helping hand to their neighbors, stressing that these efforts have been noted and appreciated in Washington. DAS Reynoso outlined the schedule of meetings to coordinate international support for Haiti and highlighted the USG's desire to work closely with the Dominican Government on Haiti-related issues.

15. (SBU) Morales replied that the GoDR has worked closely with the Embassy and the U.S. military on Haiti relief and reconstruction efforts and will continue to do so both here and through its Embassy in Washington. He noted, with regard to the donor's meeting planned for New York in late March or April, that the GoDR has decided to postpone its planned Haiti assistance summit from 14 April to early June, when it would follow the 6-8 June OAS General Assembly in Lima, Peru. He opined that this postponement was beneficial for domestic political reasons, as it would avoid any conflict with congressional/municipal elections scheduled for 16 May.

16. (SBU) The Foreign Minister recalled that, during Secretary Hillary Clinton's visit to the DR last year, the two had discussed promoting the "twin-plant" concept, creating chains of production in the DR and Haiti, and suggested that plans for Haiti's development should incorporate this idea. Morales cautioned that this concept should be referred to as creating "synergies" rather than "integration," as the latter term is politically explosive in the DR. He stated that two priorities for Haiti's sustainable development are control of water resources and reforestation. He agreed that sharing best practices with Haiti on the DR's program promoting the use of propane stoves for cooking would be helpful.

CENTRAL ELECTORAL BOARD

17. (SBU) On 8 February, DAS Reynoso met with Julio Cesar Castanos Guzman, President of the Central Electoral Board (JCE), and six other board members. She described her portfolio in the State Department, especially her responsibility for social integration policy in the hemisphere. Castanos Guzman described the JCE's role as that of an impartial mechanism to improve public access to government services. Specifically, Castanos Guzman spoke of improving access to cédulas and identity documents, a key problem, especially for poor people, in the Dominican Republic. Asked by DAS Reynoso about the situation of the children of undocumented

Haitian migrants, JCE members said they were well aware of the problems and reiterated the right of children to have an identity as enshrined in domestic and international law. They added that they were using community groups, mobile units, and religious organizations to reach disenfranchised communities to improve access to identity documents and school enrollment, though approximately 400,000 people in the country still lack documentation. After some discussion of the controversial "Foreigners' Book", which is used to document the births to the children of those not recognized by the Government as being Dominicans, JCE member Leyda Margarita Pina Medrano highlighted the challenge that providing social services to Haitian immigrants and their offspring presents to the resource-strapped Dominican Republic.

OPPOSITION LEADER MIGUEL VARGAS MALDONADO

18. (SBU) DAS Reynoso, in her 8 February meeting with Miguel Vargas Maldonado, President of the opposition Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), praised Dominican support to the Haiti relief effort, underscoring that the response of the Dominican people to help their neighbors in need has not been a partisan action. The discussion then turned to the 16 May congressional/municipal elections, with Vargas complaining that the ruling Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) was stalling on passage of a Political Party Law out of concern that enactment of this law would constrain its use of State resources during the campaign. He also hinted that many active politicians, especially those belonging to other parties, have "unclear sources of income," and should be investigated for connections to narcotrafficking. Vargas also decried profligate spending by the PLD. When DAS Reynoso asked about Vargas' presidential ambitions in 2012, the PRD leader said he planned to focus his campaign on institution-building, restoring civil discourse, and improving the quality of life for Dominicans.

STATE ELECTRICITY COMPANY HEAD CELSO MARRANZINI

19. (SBU) Celso Marranzini, the Vice President (but effective chief) of the Dominican Corporation of State-Owned Electricity Companies (CDEEE), in an 8 February meeting with DAS Reynoso, provided his insights on the status of the Haitian electricity sector. Through the HEART consortium, CDEEE has several teams working with Electricite de Haiti (EDH) to assess the damage to the grid (Reftel). He explained that a short-term solution would be to connect the Dominican grid to the Haitian grid, likely through Jimani, since this would not only help increase the amount of electricity available in Haiti but also do so at a fraction of the cost currently paid by EDH. However, he observed that the Haitian grid was not itself integrated, but instead comprised of isolated islands of power. As such, any medium- to long-term solution would need to involve improving the interconnectedness of the Haitian grid. DAS Reynoso said that energy was one of the USG's four high priority areas for Haiti reconstruction and emphasized the USG's desire to work with the Dominican Republic to achieve synergies in this sector.

DINNER WITH PROMINENT DOMINICANS

110. (SBU) DAS Reynoso's 8 February dinner with a dozen influential Dominicans from the business, academic, journalistic and cultural sectors provided the opportunity to explain the USG's policy toward Haiti and the region, as well as the state of bilateral relations, to leading opinion makers. While agreeing on the need to provide immediate assistance to Haitian relief efforts, those present expressed considerable skepticism regarding the capabilities of the Haitian political class to deal with the crisis and of the international community's approach to long-term reconstruction. One leading academic seemed to sum up the guests' thoughts when he said, "Haiti does not need a Marshall Plan, it needs a Macarthur [one]." "It is not going to get one," DAS Reynoso replied.

BREAKFAST WITH THE AMCHAM BOARD

¶11. (SBU) AMCHAM Vice President Bill Malamud, during a 9 February breakfast with DAS Reynoso, highlighted four factors he considered vital to convincing the private sector to open or expand operations in Haiti. First, the Government of Haiti (GoH) would need to guarantee security, in terms of protection of employees and respect for contracts. Second, the private sector would need improved market access, possibly through expanded trade preferences. Other board members observed that the GoH was usually reluctant to lower duties, as customs receipts were one of its few reliable sources of income, and suggested the USG could help by expanding HOPE II provisions beyond the apparel sector. Third, the private sector needed governments to provide fiscal incentives, possibly through tax credits. In this regard, AMCHAM suggested the U.S. could create a program similar to the Section 936 arrangement, which provides credits to companies operating in Puerto Rico, and which supports the integration of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean by providing funds to Puerto Rican development banks to spend in Caribbean Basin Initiative countries. Finally, AMCHAM stressed that logistical challenges would have to be met. In addition to these factors, the board members suggested that programs be developed to bring Haitians to the DR for vocational training and to convert the Dominican Republic's bilateral debt with the U.S. into a fund to promote private investment in Haiti.

¶12. (U) DAS Reynoso has not cleared on this cable.

¶13. (U) Minimize considered.
Lambert